

Q: Good afternoon. Today is July 7th, 2016. My name is Emma Patterson and I am here at the Newton Free Library with Mr. Arthur Talis. Together we are participating in the Newton Talks Oral History Project that is being conducted with the Newton Free Library, Historic Newton, and the Newton Senior Center. Here we go. Mr. Talis, what is your connection to Newton?

A: A resident of the-- a resident of the--

__: Newton Highlands?

A: --Newton Highlands, Mass.

Q: Did you live in Newton before and after your service?

A: No, I lived in Newton after my service with the Navy.

Q: Where did you live before?

A: In the South End, Boston.

Q: What were you doing before you entered the service?

A: I was in college evenings in 1945.

Q: What were you studying?

A: It was Business Course, Accounting and Taxation.

Q: After your-- During your service what did you miss most about home, aside from family and friends?

A: Freedom. I was not free to do my own thing. I had to buckle down to the military disciplines, and I went to school in the Navy when I first was in '45. I was sent to school in Great Lakes Training Center Naval for five weeks and then I was sent down to St. Louis Personnel Separation Center to discharge the Navy veterans coming back from the war.

Q: How did you join and why did you choose that specific branch?

A: Well, my brother, older brother was in the Navy and Harvard College Training ROTC, and I followed in the Navy's footsteps.

Q: Was it by choice or draft?

A: Choice.

Q: How did you adapt to military life, including the physical regime, food, and social life?

A: Very well. They gave me my three meals every day and they gave me a canvas piece of cotton to sleep on at night, and with my meals and lodging was in the Navy, it's just great, when I joined the ship USS Puget Sound CVE 113.

Q: And where was that ship stationed?

A: Alameda, California.

Q: How did you stay in touch with family and friends back home?

A: Well, that's a story. I was working in St. Louis, Missouri, and the captain of the ship got directions to get a disbursing clerk aboard his ship before he sailed for Manila, and before I knew it on the 19th of March I boarded the ship and the 20th of March we set sail for the Philippine Islands. '46.

Q: Do you remember arriving in the Philippines and what it was like?

A: Yeah. The harbor was filled of sunken ships. The masts were protruding through the water. And it was eerie. And we were to deliver P80 shooting star jet planes to Clark Field in Manila.

Q: Tell me about a few of your most memorable experiences.

A: Well, these planes were tied down with wire rope on the decks and they were jets, the first jets that the United States was shipping across the ocean to a...Clark Field, and I wasn't going to fly those jets, because I didn't know a thing about them, except that I got pictures of them, in my, all of them, that they were tied down on the decks. And we were making our way to Manila and I didn't have a chance to write home on the 19th of March, and we were out 20 days to Manila.

Q: On a lighter note, are there any particularly humorous or exciting memories from when you were on leave?

A: Well, I was in storekeeping and storekeeping included the laundry, and laundry was the place where I clean my uniforms and underwear and pressed them on a compressor. And I thought that was really living religiously. So, I was in the disbursing office, line by line punching the computer and figuring the pay of the crew twice a month.

Q: Do you recall the day your service ended?

A: August 16th, '46.

Q: What was it like on that day for you?

A: Well, I was glad to be home. I didn't know how long the war would last. Now, they bombed Nagasaki and Japan with the atomic bomb in nighttime. At 3:00 in the morning all the lights went on and we had fought, and the Japanese gave up in July, I think, and then in August the Germans gave up. And I was glad of that, because my service would be terminated and I would get a discharge.

Q: Could you tell us more about the day Nagasaki was bombed?

A: July, that's a guess, 1946.

Q: Do you remember your experience on that day?

A: Yeah. I was asleep and then the lights went on and the shades went up and everybody was yelling, and I said, "What's going on?" "Japan has given up."

Q: What was it like to return to civilian life?

A: Well, freedom, freedom away from the military regime, a continuation of my college and career and family, of course. I was so pleased to be with my family. There were eight in our family.

Q: Were those siblings?

A: Five boys and one girl, and my dad and mom.

Q: What did you go on to do after your schooling?

A: Well, I was a bookkeeper for wholesale grocers and there was a bribery in the service of Internal Revenue, and Truman at that time, the civil service, and they set the exams for Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue Agent. So I took the exam and I passed and I was selected to work. I worked out in Springfield as an Internal Revenue Agent.

Q: How did your service and experiences affect your life and your outlook on war and the military in general?

A: Well, I pray to God for those who gave their lives during World War Two. There was nothing I could do for them. And the wounded coming back. I said to myself that I was fortunate that I wasn't dumped in the sea so long ago on the warship, but this was during, it was during a time of peace, not peace but secession of hostilities, they say. So, the war affected me and so many.

We resumed our normal life and I had an eight year college course that I was following when I got back. I graduated in '52 with a Bachelor of Business Administration.

Q: What would you like people to know a hundred years from now?

A: That my service was honorable and my family was blessed with some kind of prosperity after the Depression. The Depression hit us hard because my father didn't have a job. He didn't work for years until the Works Progress Administration's Pick and Shovel, and that's what he said, he worked Pick and Shovel, \$15 dollars a week. That was the most that he could work. They didn't allow people to work more than three days so that they would have more people employed.

Q: What were you doing during that time?

A: I was going to school. I was in grammar school, elementary school, high school, and then BU, college. Yeah.

Q: Did you stay in touch with family and friends when you were in the war, with friends from back home?

A: Yeah. I had written some letters to family mostly frequently, and friends.

Q: If you don't mind me asking, how did you meet your wife?

A: My wife? She had a girlfriend and I had her as a friend of mine dating her, and it so happened that I was invited to my wife's friend's home to meet her again before she left to get married to somebody else. And well, I met Maryanne then, and it was raining and she gave me her umbrella, so I had to return it. I returned the umbrella, and guess what. So, that's the way I met her.

Q: Is there anything you would like to add?

A: Well, our ship was loaded down with jets, and they were the first jets after the Germans had blitzed England with their buzz bombs. They were jets too. And when we found out that they had developed these jet planes they went into production with their possible jet planes, the first planes, and that was a remarkable thing, because if the Germans had developed their jets to the point where they would knock out our bombers and planes we would have been in an awful fix.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?

A: Well, I still have a buddy of mine onboard ship, we had many times when we gabbed and we were standing on top of the flight deck, and out beyond several hundred feet was a spouting whale, and we were coming up on top of that whale. And I was afraid that we would be sunk, and I waved to the flight that there was a whale ahead of us, and we approached the whale and at the last moment he flipped over and dived, and we were saved.

Q: Did you have any other good moments with your friend?

A: Well, he went on to become a Minister, a Methodist Minister, and he lived in Illinois and we corresponded every Christmas card. Yeah, Paul Beech was his name.

__: Did you want to mention the international date line?

A: Oh yeah. It was on our voyage to Manila. We were making our way up to the line and it was Easter Sunday, and the next day was Easter Sunday. So, we had two Easter Sundays. That occurred when we crossed the international date line. Yeah. So, we had a good crew. There were only 600 on our ship, because they had taken the flight squadron off our ship, the Marine squadron, they had taken it off to make way for these jet planes. Yeah. And then we went up to, we went to San Diego, San Francisco, Puget Sound, and that's where we hooked a ship in mothballs, they said mothballs.

Q: Mothballs?

A: Well, what they did was they put a plastic webbing over all the gun and movable parts so that it would withstand weather and they moored it with other ships in Puget Sound. Yeah.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?

A: Well, I started high school at Boston Latin School, but after a few weeks I told my brother George, “I can’t hack this regiment at Boston Latin.” It was Latin, Greek, English, and the school was so cool and frigid to my liking, so he said, “Well, get something easier.” So, across the street was a commercial high school, so I went there to High School of Commerce, and I graduated from there.

Q: Thank you so much. Thank you so much for taking the time to do this with us. We are really happy to include you in Newton Talks Oral History Project.

A: Okay. I got pictures.

END OF INTERVIEW